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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003059

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/30/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: (S) MAYSAN PC CHAIR RUBBED WRONG BY ISF

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Dan Foote for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

(U) This is a PRT Maysan reporting cable.

¶1. (S/REL MCFI) Summary: In his first meeting with American representatives or Coalition Forces (CF) in several years, Abdul Jabar Wahid, the devout Sadrist chairman of Maysan,s Provincial Council, expressed intense dissatisfaction with this summer's "Operation Good Tidings of Peace," describing it as a politically motivated operation that allowed criminal elements to flee unfettered to Iran while harassing, targeting, and detaining innocent provincial officials. He denigrated GOI Ministry of Defense and Interior information campaigns during the operations as spreading lies against provincial government officials, designed for the political benefit of Iranian-influenced politicians. Without delving into details, he repeatedly danced around the edges of malign Iranian influence and its perpetuation of incorrect negative perceptions about the Sadrist movement in Maysan. Abdul Jabar offered to meet embassy officials and Team Leader (TL) in Baghdad to further discuss the political situation and Iran,s influence. End Summary.

¶2. (S/REL MCFI) In the semi-clandestine environment of the Governor,s office, deserted for the occasion of the anniversary of Imam Ali,s martyrdom on September 22, an engaging Abdul Jabar Wahid presented a rambling, repetitive, and passionate discourse to representatives from the PRT, 4th Brigade Combat Team/1st Cavalry, and 2nd Battalion/7th Cavalry. (Comment: The PRT has been struggling to find a comfortable venue at which to meet the PC chairman for several weeks; he appears willing to engage American interests but nervous about public knowledge about such engagements. End Comment.) He took credit for pushing PC members to meet and cooperate with the PRT since long before the team could access the province, and lauded several major USG infrastructure projects such as the 400 Kva generating station and ongoing highway and hospital projects. Abdul Jabar proudly noted that sons of Maysan are in charge of the province for the first time in modern history, with him and Governor running the show since 2005 elections.

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FRICTION TOWARD MOD/MOI  
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¶3. (S/REL MCFI) The PC chairman spoke ill of the spokesmen for the GOI Interior and Defense Ministries, Abdul Karim Khalaf and Mohammed al-Askari respectively, terming their statements about the provincial government as wrong, insulting, and ignorant. In a theme he would revisit countless times, Abdul Jabar stated that the operation, and successive Iraq Security Forces (ISF, including both Iraqi Army and Police) acts, were failing because they were not arresting killers and criminals in the province but rather targeting innocent citizens for political reasons. While he did not specifically cite his own detention (he was arrested and held for several days early in Operation Good Tidings of Peace, only to be released without charge), he mentioned the

detentions of his political brethren, the mayors of Majar al Kabir and Ali as-Sharqi, as punishment for peaceful operations when a reward would have been more appropriate.

¶4. (S/REL MCFI) In discussing provincial security, Abdul Jabar offered that Maysan,s security has always been better than that of neighboring provinces Basrah and Dhi Qar. In an apparently contradictory statement that has been common from Sadrist officials, he admitted that security in the wake of military operations was much improved. Wahid stated that recent IDF and IED attacks against CF were the direct result of the return of criminals who had been permitted to escape to Iran. He described an edict he had issued in the PC that Maysanis would not attack CF, and expressed hope that American elements would not suffer as a result of the poor ISF operations as criminals make their way back into the province. He floated his idea of cordoning off areas of Amarah to limit the freedom of movement for criminal elements.

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IRAN,S NEGATIVE INFLUENCE

¶5. (S/REL MCFI) The PC chairman made a number of passing remarks, some explicit and all obviously directed at Iranian influence, about the negative role of outside intervention in Maysan, describing it a &big conspiracy against the country.8 While he appeared uneasy about discussing details in this forum, he offered to meet TL and embassy officials in Baghdad to delve more deeply into this issue.

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BUDGET EXECUTION  
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¶6. (S/REL MCFI) Abdul Jabar Wahid remarked that the province had spent 60 percent of its budget before military operations, and was performing better than most provinces with 75 percent of 2008,s budget already spent. He pointed to the cooperation of his government with U.S. entities (RTI and the PRT) and GOI,s Ministry of Planning on sharing budget information. He mentioned that plans for spending the supplemental budget were already being implemented. He complained about the approximately \$100 million reconstruction fund for Maysan announced in the wake of Good Tidings of Peace, stating that its project ideas were misdirected and the GOI committee did not listen to provincial officials in determining how to spend this windfall. He reiterated that the provincial government has no role in the execution of these funds, stating that he believes associated projects are in the tender stage, and that Maysan has seen little if any benefit to date.

¶7. (S/REL MCFI) Comment: PC Chairman Abdul Jabar Wahid took a positive step forward in meeting with U.S. elements; he had historically refused such interactions as hypocritical for a Sadrist leader. This indicates the acceptance of Sadrist officials in Maysan that relationships with the U.S. and CF are critical to progress, and is another example of a newfound willingness to engage. While Abdul Jabar was reticent about meeting directly with ISF officials in the near term, he expressed interest in further meetings and development of a relationship with Embassy, PRT and CF leaders. It is difficult to ascertain the value of any information the PC chairman may share on Iran at this point, but it is likely worth an invitation to meet at the Embassy. End comment.  
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